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At the same sale a sheet, edged on three sides with a beautiful border of point lace was also purchased. This was presented through the kindness of Mrs. Ralph King. All these pieces will be exhibited with the Schiff collection as well as a group of lace presented by Miss Myrta L. Jones, whose continued interest has done much to build up the lace collection.

Thus it is seen that the Museum Collection of lace has reached a place where it is worthy to take rank with some of the great collections in the country. It is weak as yet in the later seventeenth and eighteenth century laces but these new accessions point the way to the future.

W. M. M.

## ETCHINGS AND DRYPOINTS BY FRANK W. BENSON

The position which Frank W. Benson holds among American painters of today naturally presupposes a certain following when he essays another medium to express himself. This interest, however, does not account for the unusual number of people who stop to study the exhibition of his etchings and drypoints in Gallery XI. In a showing of almost two hundred subjects, perhaps the most comprehensive survey of his etched work yet attempted, there is such vivid characterization and unfailing enthusiasm evinced that one is carried on delightedly from item to item in spite of the similarity of subject. Nothing short of marvelous seems this man's facility of handling when we consider that all of his prints have been made since 1912. Only the consummate artist could so express himself and make the performance so inevitably effective and diverting.

Born at Salem in 1862 Frank Weston Benson began his art studies at the school of Drawing and Painting of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In Paris he studied at the Academie Julien under Boulanger and Le Fèvre. He exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1885 and in the same year returned to America and settled in Salem where he now lives. He has painted many successful portraits but perhaps his studies of the figure posed in strong sunlight are most characteristic, if we except his paintings of light on rippled water and Monet-like renderings of atmospheric effects. This understanding and interpretative quality, so intensely felt

in his out-of-door work, is what makes for the popularity of his etchings with the people we have watched in the Gallery during the showing of his prints.

The exhibition is arranged chronologically beginning in the southwest corner. The prints in the lower row, numbering nearly one hundred subjects were sent by the artist to fill out the gaps in the representative collection loaned by local people and hung just above. Many of Mr. Benson's own collection are out of print or of so few printings that they are almost impossible to see elsewhere. The six cancelled plates he has sent testify to the fact that the artist has contributed something of his art and knowledge even to the supposedly mechanical process of printing. Line alone does not make for the effectiveness of his prints. The deft manipulation of the ink also enters in as it could only do in the hands of a painter with thorough knowledge of the graduations of tone that give the feeling of color. Of the same company as Whistler and Rembrandt he is pre-eminently a painter-etcher.

Benson is a sportsman himself and his interest in his subject is not merely that of the artist. His plates reflect the excitement and suspense he himself felt in the pursuit. One realizes the cold and discomfort of waiting "in cover" to be able to convey such truthful and convincing drawing. To "catch them on the wing" is not altogether an inspirational thing—to inspire this feeling surely attests genius. Of his earlier studies perhaps the drypoint *Black Ducks* \* (P. 21) has this quality to the greatest degree and in the etching *Geese against the Sky* (P. 38) you feel the undulating motion of the flight. In both of these the few lines of low-lying landscapes are most telling.

We find the use of landscape to give the feeling of great height again in *Wild Swans* (P. 46) which has all the delicacy we associate with the drypoint. This plate was executed in 1915 and of the same year is *Egrets* (P. 44) showing even greater delicacy. We are able to exhibit an undescribed state of this print. The owner, a Cleveland man, has one of the finest collections of Benson's etchings. It is distinguished in its early and beautiful impressions. *Morning* (P. 58) shown beside the exquisite painting of the same design and title, is of 1915 also. The rich darks of the drypoint are finely

\*Numbers are those in the Paff Catalogue.

contrasted with the whites of the light-suffused sky. *Low Tide* again illustrates the beauty and delicacy of these dry-point darks and grays but the strength and suitability of the etched line is seen in the force of the violently straining figures of the *Log Jam* (P. 73).

*Solitude* (second plate) is of the same year as the foregoing. It displays the same qualities of close observation and refined arrangement. The drawing hung just above is the original design drawn with lithographic crayon directly on the copper plate. Before the lines were traced by the point, an impression was taken on paper, thus transferring the drawing and showing it in reverse as it would appear in the etching. There is all the delicacy of the Japanese along with their sense of design. *Hurry* (P. 86), *Old Squaws* (P. 88) and the more famous *Yellowlegs* (P. 37), all executed in 1915, are also Japanese in feeling.

There is nothing oriental in the influence evidenced in *Marshes at Long Point* (P. 107), an etching of three trees against a rather glowing sky. The three trees of course subject it to comparison with Rembrandt. This plate was drawn in 1916 as was the drypoint entitled *Ducks* (P. 95) which although much larger is reminiscent of that most attractive and popular drypoint called *Hurry*. Another popular subject is the very large *Pintails* (P. 105). In *Geese Alighting* (P. 92) and in *Migrating Geese* (P. 106) Mr. Benson's notable power in translating motion and buoyancy is startlingly displayed.

*Incoming Geese* (P. 114) etched in 1917, presents once more the artist's skill in conveying the sense of flying. His technical knowledge of the structure of birds is so convincing as to almost persuade one of the feasibility of flight for oneself—so easy of accomplishment it looks. In the *Study of Geese* (P. 117), the *Snowy Herons* (P. 118), the *Goose and Teal* (P. 125) and especially in the *Mallard Drake* (P. 122), the artist's facility and skill in rendering the texture and color of plumage is astonishingly illustrated, but this facility is not the outstanding quality. The sense of swift gliding through the air is particularly felt. This is so in the noteworthy design called the "V" (P. 121) and in *Sheldrake* (P. 126) and in *Redheads* (P. 127).

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A bit of humor which perhaps bespeaks a greater sense of freedom with his medium seems evident in the *Visitor* (P. 145), and in *Ducks in the Rain* (P. 147) made in 1918. *Marshes at Evening* (P. 131), *Mates* (P. 132), *Three Geese* (P. 135), *Mallards No. 2* (P. 138) and *Winter Yellowlegs* (P. 142), are all charming and of this year. *Heron in a Pine Tree* (P. 129) is pre-eminently concerned with design while *Sprigtail* (P. 151) is an accomplished bit of drawing depicting action. *The Marsh Gunner* (P. 149) in straight etching is considered his finest.

The *Seal for the Peabody Museum, Salem* (P. 154), and two portraits, one of Charles Martin Loeffler (P. 156) and the other of Augustus Hemenway (P. 157) together with *Broadbills* (P. 153) and *Souvenir of Long Point* (P. 155) complete the Paff Catalogue in 1919. The portraits with a few others shown are dignified but not of the same interest as the other studies. Mr. Benson has loaned a dozen or so prints not included in the catalogue, and, of these, *Blackbirds and Rushes* (P. 176), *Chickadees* (P. 158), the *Dark Pool* (P. 189), and *Water Lilies* are almost pure decoration. Of the later plates likewise are *Boats at Dawn* (P. 190), *Heron Fishing*, *Over Sunk Marsh* (P. 188), *Black Ducks No. 2* and a very delicate and beautiful *Yellowlegs*. This last is drypoint as were the others of the series and one of the birds with its wings upraised displays beautifully worked plumage.

The impression after viewing this comprehensive showing of Mr. Benson's work is one of having enjoyed oneself and there is an unexpressed wish that other etchers might break with the stereotyped and put a bit more of themselves and their enjoyment of the life all about them into their work. This is almost a diary of the artist's last few years. It is astonishingly full of the spirit of keen wind and bright air.

W. McC. McK.

## THE EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT

The rapidly increasing demands made upon the Educational Department of the Museum have made it evident for some time that the department would have to be enlarged and reorganized if all the legitimate demands for educational service were to be adequately met.